



# BIENNIUM REVIEW

## Homelessness

### Key changes

- \$420 million in total funding was appropriated in the 2021-23 biennium for Rapid Housing Acquisition in the Capital Budget.
- \$2.4 Billion in Operating Budget appropriations related to housing and homelessness over the biennium.
- \$97 million appropriated for permanent supportive housing and services related to the implementation of the Apple Health and Homes Act.

### Background

Homelessness is a complex social and economic issue that has had a particularly visible impact on Washington State over the past decade. While these visible impacts are tragic, the “unseen” impacts are incredibly costly to Washington taxpayers. As of 2020, Washington State was home to the fifth highest homeless population and home to the fourth highest veteran homeless population. In addition, chronic homelessness (individuals who have experienced homelessness for over one year) has skyrocketed in recent years. Contributing factors to homelessness include housing affordability, housing supply, unemployment, mental health, substance abuse, and access to resources. While the state legislature has made significant investments in some of these areas, namely housing supply, it has failed to appropriately address other contributing factors, such as substance abuse and access to resources. The 2021-23 biennium saw historic investments in permanent supportive housing and rental assistance programs as part of a “Housing First” approach to tackling and preventing homelessness. However, without addressing the other contributing factors, it is clear that this problem will persist and may get progressively worse.

### Bills

- ✓ [House Bill 1738](#) (Peterson) – **Housing Finance Commission Debt Limit.** Increases the statutory debt limit for the Washington State Housing Finance Commission from \$8 billion to \$14 billion. *Passed House 66-32. Signed by Governor. Effective June 9, 2022.*
- ✓ [House Bill 1818](#) (Simmons) – **Housing Vouchers for Re-Entry.** The maximum period for housing vouchers issued to individuals released from the Department of Corrections is extended from three months to six months. Eligibility is expanded to individuals who may not be receiving community support services upon release to prevent homelessness upon release. *Passed House 87-10. Signed by Governor. Varying Effective Dates.*
- ✓ [Senate Bill 5566](#) (Kuderer) – **Independent Youth Housing.** Eligibility under the Independent Youth Housing Program is expanded to include youth who were formerly a dependent of the state any time prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, are under the age of 25, and can include youth who are receiving Extended Foster Care services. *Passed House 55-41. Signed by Governor. Effective June 9, 2022.*
- ✓ [Senate Bill 5815](#) (Cleveland) – **Identicards for Homeless Individuals.** The Department of Licensing must create and implement an identicard program to provide homeless individuals with a one-time, free state-issued identicard. *Passed House 94-3. Signed by Governor. Effective January 1, 2023.*
- ✓ [House Bill 1866](#) (Chopp) – **Apple Health and Homes Program.** Established the Apple Health and Homes program to provide permanent supportive housing benefits for individuals enrolled in Apple Health who meet income, health,

and risk factor criteria. Appropriation for implementation can be found below. *Passed House 87-9. Signed by Governor. Effective June 9, 2022.*

- ✓ [Senate Bill 5883](#) (Trudeau) – **Healthcare for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth.** Authorizes an unaccompanied homeless youth to give informed consent for non-emergency, outpatient, primary care services. A health care provider may ask for proof of homelessness but is not required to. *Passed House 57-41. Signed by Governor. Effective June 9, 2022.*
- ✗ [House Bill 1541](#) (Stokesbary) – **Local Sales and Use Tax Remittance for Addressing Homelessness.** Allows a city or county to approve a 0.125% sales and use tax specifically for addressing homelessness. This tax will be credited against the 6.5% state sales and use tax. This tax must be approved by the legislative authority of the city or county, and requires a city or county to adopt various measures including restrictions on supervised injection sites, not allowing unlawful camping near schools and public parks, and not simultaneously imposing various other taxes. *Died in House Finance Committee.*
- ✗ [House Bill 1952](#) (Caldier) – **GMA/UGA Flexibility for Additional Homeless Housing Solutions.** A county planning under the GMA may establish a process to review proposals that provide assistance to homeless individuals. These proposals must be within one mile of the Urban Growth Area (UGA) boundary and there must be a need for additional land for these purposes. *Died in House Local Government Committee.*
- ✗ [House Bill 1183](#) (Caldier) – **Home Sharing Supports Grant Program.** Establishes the Home Sharing Support Grant program within the Department of Commerce. The program would provide financial support to non-profit organizations that operate home sharing programs to provide low-cost housing solutions for homeless individuals. *Died in House Local Government Committee.*

## Budget information

### Operating

**Rental and Utility Assistance** – Large sums of federal and state dollars were allocated toward programs established due to COVID-19 to ensure tenants were able to maintain their housing and landlords were able to continue operating. Funding in this category was mainly appropriated to fund the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, Eviction Prevention Rental Assistance Program, the Landlord Mitigation Program, and others (\$1.1 Billion in 2021-23 Operating Budget for rental assistance, \$100 Million for utility assistance)

### **Homeless Support Services**

- Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) – Grants to local governments to provide housing vouchers and essential needs (\$131 Million)
- Office of Youth Homelessness – Grant programs focused on youth homelessness and services (\$59 Million)
- Permanent Supportive Housing Grants – Grants used for rental subsidies and services for those residing in permanent supportive housing (\$37 Million)
- Right of Way Response and Outreach – (\$45 Million)
- Apple Health and Homes Program – Funding provided for implementation of HB 1866 (\$37 Million)

### Capital

**Rapid Capital Housing Acquisition** – Grants administered through the Department of Commerce for purchase or rental of property for quick conversion into homeless or emergency shelters, permanent supportive housing, or affordable housing for low-income people. Of this, \$20 million must be used for housing projects in rural and underserved areas (\$360 million total for the 2021-23 biennium through the Capital Budget)

**Apple Health and Homes Program** – Provided appropriations to be used for the acquisition of rapid permanent supportive housing to implement ESHB 1866 (\$60 million in 2022 Supplemental Capital Budget)

**Homeless Youth Facilities** – Funding is appropriated for nine facilities to shelter homeless youth (\$15 million in 2022 Supplemental Capital Budget)